



St Nicholas Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	148680
Inspection date	12 October 2006
Inspector	Glenda Pownall / Samantha Hunt
Setting Address	Hurst Village Hall, School Road, Hurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG10 0DR
Telephone number	0118 934 3677
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Registered person	St Nicholas Pre-School Playgroup
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St Nicholas Pre-School Playgroup has been established for over 30 years and operates from the small village hall. It is run by a voluntary committee of parents. It is situated in Hurst on the outskirts of Wokingham, Berkshire.

A maximum of 21 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 11.30 and from 12.30 to 15.00 term time only. A lunchtime session operates from 11.30 to 12.30. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 38 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The pre-school employs five staff. The manager and one staff member hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally have their dietary and medical needs met because staff discuss with parents and record children's requirements to ensure they meet the individual needs of each child. There are a number of policies in place to promote the health of children. However, staff do not always follow these effectively and some procedures are not clear. For example, despite staff checking each term that the contents of the first aid box are suitable for use on children a number of items are well past the expiry date. Staff do not ensure parents always sign to give prior consent for medication to be administered, which is a breach of regulations. The written policy and procedure to administer medication differ as one does not record the requirement for staff to request prior written consent from parents. In addition, the accident and medication records are not stored confidentially. This compromises children's health.

Children develop understanding of a healthy lifestyle through effective daily routines and support from staff. Children wash their hands at appropriate times and know they wash their hands before eating because of germs. Snack times are social occasions where children sit together and choose from a wide selection of fresh fruit and vegetables. Staff encourage children who stay to lunch to eat their savoury items by rewarding them with a sticker when they have eaten their sandwiches. Children have a choice of milk or water to drink at snack time. Although children can request a drink at anytime water is not readily available to them during the session to further promote independence skills.

Children's physical development is progressing well as they have regular opportunities to experience physical play in the fresh air throughout the year. Children climb up scramble nets with ease, steer buggies and wheeled toys with skill to avoid moving objects and dig in the garden. Some children are adept at balancing and walking on flower pot stilts.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean and tidy environment where they have sufficient space to move about freely. Staff make the hall a welcoming environment for parents and children by displaying children's own work and a notice board for parents with useful information on. Children access a very wide range of resources covering all areas of development. Good quality props in the role-play area, such as a real child sized wheelchair and crutches in the 'Accident and Emergency department', enhance children's play experiences. Some resources are stored at low level enabling children to make decisions about what they play with. However the height of the computer work station is not conducive to children's health or learning.

Staff carry out a daily visual risk assessment of the premises and equipment to reduce the risks to children. For example, the outside slide is dried before children use it and large scissors are

put out of children's reach when not in use. However, these daily checks are not rigorous enough. For example, the outdoor plastic caterpillar equipment is not dried before children climb onto and over it. Children occasionally access the kitchen unsupervised where there are knives and plastic bags in unlocked drawers and an unopened bottle of wine within reach on a table. Staff leave a bucket containing a solution of disinfectant and water, used to clean the toilets, next to the sink children use to wash their hands. This compromises children's safety.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the procedure to follow if concerned a child is at risk from abuse. Some staff attend training to update their knowledge and cascade this information to colleagues to ensure all staff have a sound understanding of child protection. However, the pre-school does not have a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) procedure or the 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' publication to ensure its policy is in line with current regulations. The record book to record child protection concerns is not stored confidentially. This does not ensure children are fully safeguarded whilst in the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff form warm relationships with children which helps them to develop a strong sense of self. For example, children readily approach staff to read stories or for help to put aprons on. Children are happy and confident in the pre-school and there is lots of chatter between children whilst they complete activities. Children freely choose which activities to participate in. As a result of effective support from staff children show curiosity in how things work and use trial and error. For example, after a demonstration by staff children move iron filings with magnets and make metal objects move by 'magic' across the table by placing the magnet underneath. They then with staff support walk around the pre-school identifying objects the magnets can and cannot pick up.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a secure knowledge of the early learning goals. They understand how activities link to more than one area of learning and generally use open-ended questions to encourage children to think for themselves. All staff are involved in planning a broad curriculum for children. The key worker system is effective. Staff make observations of the children and use this information to plan appropriate next steps in learning for all children. Evaluation of planned activities is not specific and as a result, the progress some children make in certain areas is not recorded or used to further promote children's individual learning and development.

Children enter the setting keen to learn and leave their main carers with ease. They are confident to speak in front of the whole group to talk about the object they have brought from home. They learn to take turns as they play board games and work together to construct models selecting and rejecting pieces until they reach the desired outcome. Children develop independence skills as they take themselves to the toilet, wash their hands after messy activities and change their clothes for physical education sessions. Staff are observant of children's needs and offer support when required.

Children use language confidently to speak to each other and answer staff questions. They develop understanding of letters and the sounds they make through fun activities including using computer programmes. Children competently use the computer. They click and drag the mouse to link pictures to their initial sounds. Children enjoy books for pleasure and 'read' stories to themselves and their peers. Staff make themselves available to read stories to children during the session. They read group stories with enthusiasm and children listen intently answering questions and making relevant comments.

Children have daily opportunities to experiment with making marks. They freely draw using a variety of resources, such as, pencils, paints and chinks and experiment with making patterns in shaving foam. They play imaginatively in 'the office' and write invitations and letters which they post in the post box. Staff generally encourage children to attempt to write their name. Some children can write recognisable letters. Children count as part of the daily routine and some children can count to 10 and beyond. Children develop understanding of simple calculation through singing number songs and adding together how many boys and girls are present. Children spontaneously count at activities. For example, when modelling play dough a child counts and calculates as he sticks some resources into it " ...eleven and there's one more twelve". The weekly shape encourages children to develop understanding of flat shapes.

Children increase their knowledge of the world around them through a wide range of activities. They excitedly dig in the garden for worms and show concern for living things as they place them carefully in the palms of their hands. Staff support and extend the activity by providing magnifying tubs for children to put their findings in and asking them to identify which ones are bigger and smaller. Children manipulate tools with skill. They concentrate whilst using scissors to cut stripes for zebras, manipulate puzzle pieces and saw and hammer wood to make aeroplanes and beds. Children have many opportunities to use their imaginations inside and outdoors. They work together to create storylines and negotiate roles. Children thoroughly enjoy singing and music sessions. They are adept at beating instruments in time to the music and follow staff instructions to change the dynamics by playing louder or softer whilst singing 'I hear thunder'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff plan a broad range of activities to widen children's knowledge of the world around them. These include celebrating festivals different to their own, such as Chinese New Year and Holi. Children develop further understanding of the local community through visitors to the setting and outings into the local community. For example, children receive visits from the local fire brigade and police officer along with their vehicles for children to explore. Children visit the library, local school and the butcher to see how sausages are made. Staff encourage parents to share aspects of their culture with the children. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There is an effective system in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities ensuring they are given appropriate support to enable them to participate fully in activities. Staff generally manage children and their behaviour very well. They are polite and act as good role models treating each other, children and visitors with respect. They usually give children

a clear explanation of why they should not do something. Children know the routine of the setting well and generally behave very well.

Partnership with parents is good. Regular newsletters, a parent notice board, an invitation to attend all committee meetings and a daily verbal exchange of information with staff keeps parents informed about the activities undertaken by their child and the routines of the setting. This contributes towards continuity of care for children. The setting encourages parental involvement by organising activities for parents and children, such as a teddy bears picnic on a Saturday to enable working parents to attend. The complaints policy and contact details of the regulator are displayed on the notice board to parents. This promotes the welfare of children.

The procedure for parents to request to see their child's progress records whilst helping on the parent rota does not ensure all parents are regularly informed of their child's progress along the stepping stones. Staff do not record or use parents comments about their child's development to support the individual plans for children's next steps in learning. However, parents have many opportunities to share in their children's learning. For example, they help on the parent rota, support their child to find their name on the 'name tree' and to find objects for the shape of the week. Parents state they are happy with the care and education their children receive and particularly like the friendly environment.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The supervisor has a clear understanding of her role and responsibility to promote the wellbeing of children. There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure staff are suitable to work with children and that children are not left alone with people who are not vetted. However, a number of records containing personal information on children are stored in an unlocked cupboard which is accessible to anyone using the hall. Most of the policies and procedures of the setting have not been updated since 2003. As a result, staff do not always follow efficient Health and Safety practices to promote the welfare of children at all times. Ofsted has not been informed of the changes to committee members. This is a breach of regulation.

Children are secure in the nursery environment as they are cared for by supportive staff who know them well. The sessions are well organised to give children access to an interesting variety of activities. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are good. The supervisor provides efficient leadership and staff work well together as a team. As a result, sessions run smoothly. The setting is very well resourced and provides a stimulating learning environment for children. The committee and supervisor monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education and quality of teaching through observing staff practice and children's achievements. This system is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure the effective evaluation of activities and that comments from parents are incorporated in the development records to further enhance children's learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provision was asked to maintain confidentiality in the accident and medication records and ensure all staff have updated child protection training. Confidentiality is maintained within the documents as only one child's details are recorded per page. However, the documents themselves are not stored confidentially and this compromises children's health. All staff have received up to date child protection training to support the wellbeing of children.

The provision was also asked to share play plans with parents and formalise the evaluation of activities. Play plans are shared with parents on request although the current system does not ensure all parents are regularly informed of their child's next steps. There is a system in place to evaluate activities and identify what children learn. However, the evaluation is not specific to individual children so it is not used to further children's development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review the policies and procedures of the setting to ensure they are in line with current regulations and confidentiality is maintained in all documents
- review the risk assessment procedures of the setting to identify potential hazards to children's safety and take steps to minimise these risks
- ensure the regulator is informed of any changes in the committee
- obtain written permission from parents before agreeing to administer any medication to children and ensure the medication procedure is clear and followed at all times.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- develop the evaluation of activities to identify what individual children can do and use this information to plan their next steps in learning
- incorporate comments from parents about their child's development in the assessment records and review the system for sharing children's records with parents to ensure all parents are regularly informed of their child's progress along the stepping stones.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk